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FONDAZIONE MUSEO
DELLE ANTICHITÀ EGIZIE DI TORINO

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Eleni Vassilika

THE TOMB OF KHA

The Architect

FONDAZIONE MUSEO DELLE ANTICHITÀ EGIZIE DI TORINO

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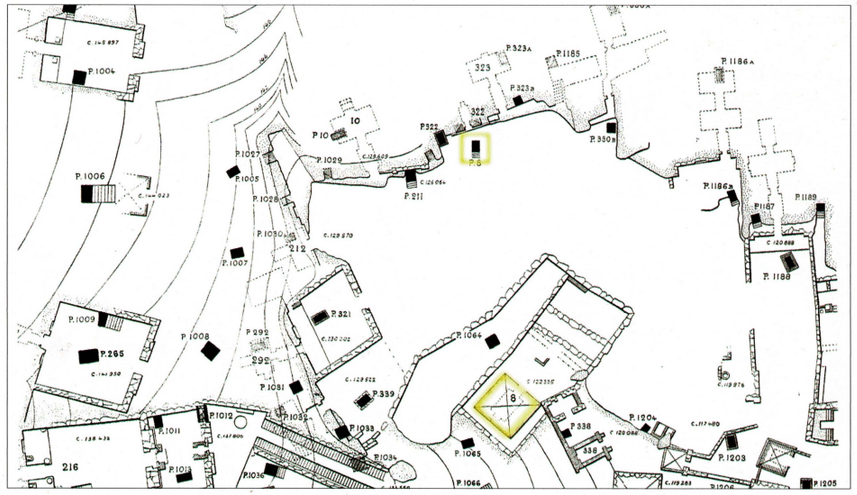
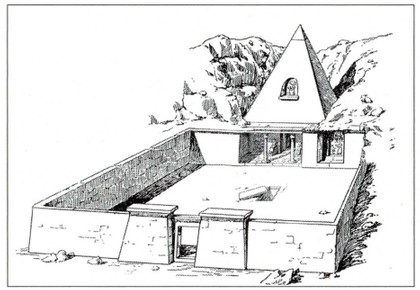
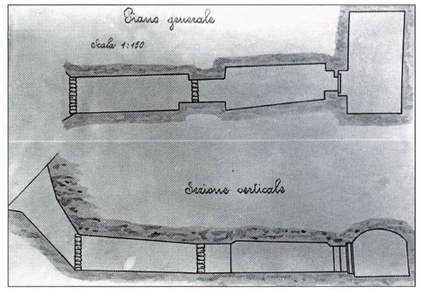
INTRODUCTION

The tomb of Kha is the best surviving furnished, non royal tomb from ancient Egypt. Kha is thought to have been a man of modest background, who may have enjoyed a successful career on the basis of merit, working for the king. He may have started as a scribe (according to inscriptions on two of his walking sticks), and then rose through the ranks to become the overseer of construction of the royal tombs. His professional career spanned the reigns of Kings Amenhotep II, Tuthmosis IV and Amenhotep III (some twenty years before the reign of Tutankhamun, 1330-1323 BC). Kha oversaw the workmen, who carved out and decorated these royal tombs. It is probable that he too was an able hand at land surveying and marking out, judging from the well worn tools

Facing page: statuette of Kha on a high-backed chair.







Reconstruction of a typical tomb at Deir el-Medina, consisting of an entry pylon, courtyard, funeral chapel capped by a small pyramid and a crypt accessible through a shaft in the forecourt.

Tomb of Kha: plan and section drafted by the Egyptologist, Francesco Ballerini.

found among his personal belongings. One might imagine that such ability endeared him to the artisans who worked under him. Perhaps this professional respect explains the fact that Kha's tomb was never destined to be violated by contemporary grave robbers. Nevertheless, Kha did hide his grave in a place some 25 metres north of the family funerary chapel, which was open for all to see, and where one expected to find the tomb under the forecourt. Certainly his tomb's location had long been forgotten some three centuries later when tomb robbery was at its height. He began the preparations for his tomb in life and he arranged to have his coffins built and decorated. Suddenly, he was predeceased by his petite wife and so his coffin was employed for her, rather than for himself. One imagines the shock and profound sadness of the man, who in sorrow gives to his wife that which was meant for himself. The tomb was closed, until it was re-opened to receive his own corpse and funerary equipment. After Kha's funeral, the tomb was sealed with a door and the passageway leading to it was bricked up at two points.

Kha's Family Life

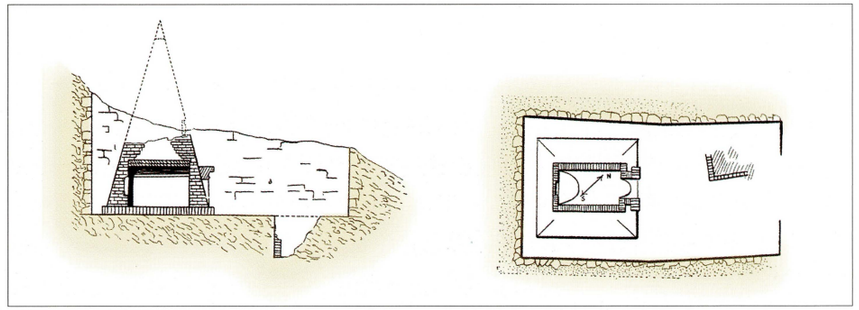
Kha and Merit were survived by three living children. One son, Nakhteftaneb, and the daughter Merit appear on the chapel walls and he appears again on chests in the tomb, whereas the other son, Amenopet, is depict-

ed on the stele (associated with the chapel) that came to Turin in 1824, in which he conducts the funerary rites. Amenopet worked in the service of the state (it is not clear in what position), but his brother Nakhteftaneb had no titles and may not have succeeded much in life. Their sister Merit perhaps married well and became a priestess in the service of the god Amun. Evidently, Kha's affluence was such that his offspring could live without all the furniture that was put into their parents' tomb, and thus out of circulation. A certain Neferheb, a variation of the name Neferhebef, with his wife Lady Tauioun significantly appear on the chapel and make up the same couple as named on the *senet*-game. They might have been closely related to Kha. Schiaparelli excluded them as parents because Kha's father Aui is named on the *Book of the Dead* found in the tomb. It is possible that 'our' Kha is the owner of a stele in the British Museum (EA 1515), whose titles correspond, whereas the wife is differently named.

The Village of Deir el-Medina

Deir el-Medina: view of the town.

Kha's work probably brought him to the village of Deir el-Medina, where the royal artisans lived (estimated about a century and half later



Funeral chapel of Kha: plan and section (from Jeanne Vandier D'Abbadie, "La chapelle de Kha", le Caire, 1939, p. 3).

to be some 120 families or 1200 people).

Given Kha's station as Director of the Royal Works, and given the amount of furniture in his tomb that was derived from life, it is unlikely that he had a permanent abode in the village of little houses at Deir el-Medina, where the tomb builders lived (perhaps only during specific projects in this period) at the expense of the royal purse, but that he lodged there only when he was working. Records from a later date indicate that the men from Deir el-Medina worked in numbers ranging from 30 to 120, divided into two groups for the left and right sides of a royal tomb. They worked in two shifts of four hours on an eight days week, followed by a two day weekend. On their days off they were able to work at building their own tombs nearby. Given the presence of his tools, one wonders the extent to which Kha worked on his own tomb and funerary chapel. Did he use his own men? Texts from a later period record the charges against a scribe who misappropriated royal workmen for his own purposes. There is no evidence that Kha behaved inappropriately. Perhaps his work on the tomb or chapel was done together with one or both of his sons. The chapel was a brick superstructure, barrel vaulted within, and encased with a steep brick pyramid (over 3 metres with a 43° angle at the summit) topped with a limestone pyramidion that is now in the Louvre (E 13988).

Kha's Status

The Deir el-Medina houses were small, but based on the state salary, the men living there represented the middle class earning three times the pay packet of a farm worker. The idea that there might have been a sharp socio-economic divide in ancient Egypt is unlikely. It appears that society was graded, but with a strong middle class. Based on a number of factors ranging from Kha's lack of hereditary titles to a comparative survey of tomb furniture, it has been suggested that Kha was at the lowest level of the elite. A century later, the price of a coffin was equivalent to the price of a donkey or a cow. With a total of five (nested) coffins for Kha and Merit in the tomb, this demonstrates a certain affluence. The fact that some of the coffins were gilded is an obvious show of wealth. However, the gilding has been measured to be between 10 to 11 microns in thickness, which would represent less than a gold tooth. Radiography has revealed a number of jewels, some certainly of precious metal, still on the mummies. A gold ring also was tucked up in the linen under Merit's mask, a last minute inclusion before burial. Another expensive item was linen, and there was much placed in the tomb along with full sets of clothing and underwear (monogrammed). Clothing was always of linen and came in various qualities: "smooth" (said to be the cheapest), "thin", and "fine" or "good thin". It was among the commodities furnished normally to royal tomb workmen, as is evident from the famous 'Strike Papyrus' of Turin (Cat. 1880), in which the workmen complain that they have not received their food and clothing rations.

Six linen monogrammed loincloths resting on a white, rectangular stool with woven seat.

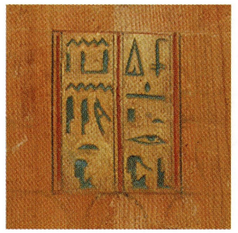
Internal chamber of the tomb, photographed at the time of the discovery: against the walls, two large sarcophagi covered with linen cloths; in the middle ground, furniture (bed, chair, stools and coffers), vessels, breads and persea branches scattered about.

Preparation of Tomb Goods

When he opened the door to the tomb, the excavator Ernesto Schiaparelli found the inner chamber full with two great coffins (with coffins nested within) covered with dust sheets, furniture including beds, numerous chests filled with linen and salves, vessels of every description filled with foodstuffs, stacks of breads in a variety of shapes, branches and dried plants *etc.* There was a total of over 500 items, all of which would have served Kha and his wife Merit in the Afterlife. It is not evident to us the extent to which material was made specifically for the tomb. The excavator allowed that some furnishing with funerary in-

scriptions were re-used for the tomb. Other objects such as the throne-like chair, he considered to be a reproduction for the tomb of a more precious one with marquetry. So too, he thought that all the coffers, especially those with decorative motifs known from tomb ceilings, were prepared for the tomb. It is, however, more probable that the furnishings were used in life and then decorated and inscribed, packed, closed and sealed for placement in the tomb. The names of the various furnishings are known to us through documents: *e.g.* beds, tables (rare), boxes (with and without legs), chairs, folding stools, and these are all represented in Kha's tomb. Some of the objects show obvious signs of wear, such as missing rails on stools. It is possible that many of the objects used in life were inscribed by means of sunk relief and painted plain white or with colourful patterns (in the case of wooden objects), incised and punched (metalwork) and more commonly inscribed in black ink, just before being placed in the tomb. A chair blazing in colourful motifs in a thick impasto (possibly not absolutely colourfast) was not a likely item for daily use. It would have been used undecorated in life, like oth-

Various loaves of bread on a rectangular rattan table.



Merit's wig box: detail of the inscription.

Coffer of Kha: detail of the inscription in a column on the front and lid, using the knobs as the point of departure.

Pediment-shaped casket: detail of the painted scene with Kha and Merit seated at a table piled with foods. There are some errors in the inscription.

er furniture such as stools and beds, and then painted for the funeral. Some of the white stools probably were painted white for use in life and later whitened again for insertion in the tomb. Merit's wig box has beautifully executed sunk relief funerary texts and the beginnings of painted decoration on three vertical faces, suggesting that one artisan was responsible for the texts and another, or others, were meant to decorate the rest with patterns and funerary scenes. The painted inscriptions on the funerary scenes of the chests are often wildly incorrect in terms of word order and with the words facing every which way. These numerous errors were presumably done by painters, without a grounding as scribes. Or was this a friendly inside joke by Kha's ex colleagues? Another feature of the chests is the direction of the texts. Both the sunk relief texts and the painted ones are often painted down one vertical surface, usually the front of the box where the knob is (from top to bottom), and again on the lid from the knob at the front, running

Two three-legged stools with concave seats, painted white.

Pediment-shaped box for Kha decorated with yellow, green, white and black geometric motifs.

Cosmetic box of Merit with flat cover, decorated with green, white, red and black geometric motifs.

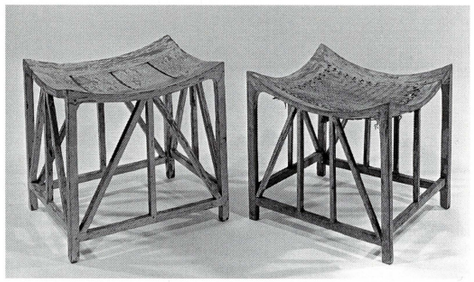
backwards towards the back of the box as if intended to be read from above while standing behind the box. The inscriptions in sunk relief are almost all beautifully composed, rhetorically and grammatically correct, as are most of the brief inked tags on objects (two hands are evident, one less adept), revealing a certain specialisation.

The fact that so little is inscribed for Merit, suggests that Kha lived with a large percentage of the furniture until his death, when it was then tagged for him and his *ka*-spirit and placed in the tomb. For example, the two tripod stools, one large, presumably for Kha, and one smaller for Merit (?), were nevertheless both tagged for Kha when they were eventually put into the tomb. No doubt some chattels were left behind for the surviving family. It is unlikely that with the emphasis on clothing in Egypt being what it was, and with the presence in this tomb of so much linen (some fifty loincloths alone; surely no survivor would have wanted to inherit), that these would not normally have been kept in chests in life. The flat-lidded chests were eminently suited to stacking in the home (particularly in smaller lodgings), whereas the pitched roof variety were more of an encumbrance and surely from a larger home environment than that at Deir el-Medina. It is an interesting fact that of these pedimental chests, there are at least three separate approaches

Detail of an inscription, whose painted decoration was left unfinished, with traces of white overlapping.

to their construction and opening devices, which would imply different artisans or workshops, and perhaps their acquisition over a long time span. Many of the decoration schemes and the palette of colours are related from object to object. The patterns and mostly green colours of Merit's flat-topped beauty case are similar to a pedimental chest with Kha's name. This may mean that both items were painted by the same artisan or workshop at different times, maybe even years apart (we do not know the interval between the death of Merit and that of Kha). It is difficult to imagine that some chests, at least, were decorated for use, used in daily life, but with areas left blank for eventual funerary inscriptions or scenes. It is reasonable to assume that the objects were given a funerary context just before burial. In fact, close examination of the decoration of the chests suggests that there were at least two different hands active, one more precise than the other in its application of colour which tended towards an overriding red scheme (as opposed to a green one). One asks oneself whether some of the coffers and stools were painted white for placement in the tomb, since one coffer shows that its white covers some of the newly sunk funerary text, which however was never finished with the characteristic yellow background and blue lettering. However, there is evidence that some furniture, such as the stools, were already white and were then brightened up with another coat of white before burial.

It is worth noting that Kha and Merit are shown in scenes sitting on and in front of furniture depicted as wooden (brown or black in colour) or white.



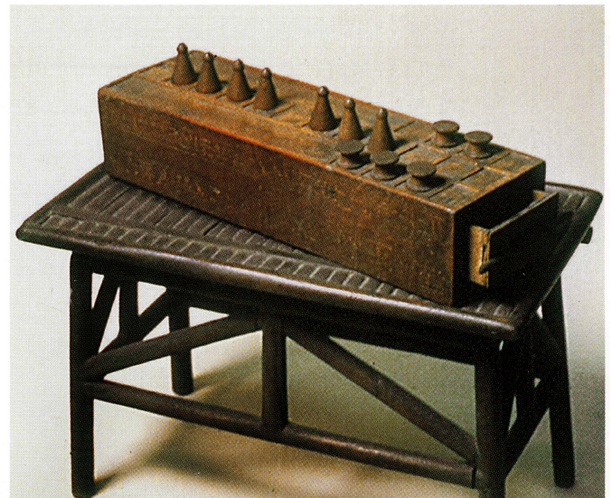
Two rectangular stools, painted white: one with woven seat, the other with wooden slats.

Gifts for the Tomb

A number of gifts were included in the tomb. A gold foil cubit was presumably a royal gift with an inscription from King Amenhotep II mentioning a temple project (that Kha might have worked on). A bronze bowl (called a *patera* by Schiaparelli) was inscribed with the cartouche of King Amenhotep III. A bronze *situla*-bucket was the gift of a certain living priest named Userhat (son of the scribe Sau) and a scribal palette once belonged to Amenmes.

On none of these gifts is there any mention of Kha. We now arrive at some of the gifts that are more difficult to understand. Among the many walking sticks in the tomb were two for a certain Neferhebef and Khaemwaset described literally as "may he repeat his life" and who may have died before Kha. What was the mechanism that might have resulted in a gift from dead persons? Did the survivors of Kha's departed friends inscribe these and place them in Kha's tomb? The strangest gift is that of the *senet*-game box. Schiaparelli claimed it was owned by Benermerit, then given to Neferhebef and then to Kha. However, a recent examination reveals that Benermerit is shown making an offering to his deceased father Neferhebef, an Overseer of Royal Works, who may be the same owner of the walking stick. Did the son Benermerit place in Kha's tomb the *senet*-game, which was a grave good intended for his own father? Would it have mattered which tomb it stood in?

Cubit covered with gold leaf, probably presented to Kha by pharaoh Amenhotep II.



An Egyptian board game known as *senet*.

The Excavator, Ernesto Schiaparelli

Ernesto Schiaparelli, Director of the Museo Egizio di Torino, excavated the village of Deir el-Medina. He spotted a crevice not far away with debris and moved some 250 workmen there to clear the area for a month, before he uncovered the descent to the tomb of Kha. The story of how the tomb of Kha and all its furnishings came to be in Turin begins with Schiaparelli himself.

The son of a professor of ancient history, Ernesto Schiaparelli chose to specialise in Egyptology (1877), and went on to study with the Lombard born Gaston Maspero in Paris (1878-80). His philological research conducted there (*Il libro dei funerali degli antichi egiziani,* 1881-82) is described as so rigorous that it resembled more the English style as opposed to that of the French. Schiaparelli became Director of the Museo Egizio of Florence (1881), where he published a catalogue, primarily of the inscribed material there (1887).

In 1894 Schiaparelli became Director of the Museo Egizio di Torino replacing Giuseppe Goffredo Ariodante Fabretti, a progressive and revolutionary sympathiser and atheist of the diminished post-unification intelligentsia. Schiaparelli was a man of deep catholic conviction, well connected in the church, with a conservative political view. One imagines that the difference in character from his predecessor is what propelled Schiaparelli to alter the look and re-install the Museo Egizio (in vitrines identical to those he had produced in Florence). Initially, Schiaparelli was able to secure an annual subsidy from the private royal purse (Vittorio Emanuele III) towards a campaign of acquisitions in Egypt. After acquiring, he turned to archaeological excavations (1903-1920), which were to enrich the Museum with some 17,000 objects. He was the one to discover the sacked, but remarkably

Portrait of Ernesto Schiaparelli.

painted tomb of Queen Nefertari, wife of King Ramesses II, that he arranged to have recorded. Eventually he turned to Deir el-Medina, at the suggestion of his old tutor, Maspero, who had become Director of the Antiquities Service in Egypt.

Despite Schiaparelli's popularity due to this find, with hindsight his weak points become visible. For example, he published little of his excavations, and when, many years later. He discovered the tomb of Kha in 1906, but only came round to publishing it in 1927. In the book he left many questions unanswered, went off on lengthy exegeses on peripheral issues and made some downright mistakes. Some cursory notes in a small notebook of his are preserved, further written material must have been to hand at home, where he sat down to write with a heart condition, a faulty memory and perhaps a guilty conscience, a year before his death at the age of 72.

Archaeology was a new and developing science as Schiaparelli was excavating. As in all sciences, documentation is fundamental. Flinders Petrie emphasised the importance of observing everything found, and he published some 1000 articles and books (although Petrie too has been criticised for selling some of his finds to support his excavations). The Egypt Exploration Fund was founded in 1882 by the Victorian writer Amelia Edwards (*A Thousand Miles up the Nile*) in order to record the monuments and put archaeology on a more scientific

footing. Schiaparelli's old teacher Maspero was a man committed to recording the monuments, scenes and inscriptions in many tombs. Maspero arranged and catalogued the enormous collection in the Cairo Museum, editing some 50 volumes, and he published more than any Egyptologist, almost 1200 items. Most of those excavating in Egypt, as today, also held university appointments or museum posts that involved commitments on their time as well, but the majority managed to publish. Schiaparelli has been praised for using photography (his brother Cesare was a photographer) in the field. The photographs of the inside of Kha's tomb before the removal of the material are fundamental to our understanding of the last moments before the tomb was sealed. Photographs were normally made of the tomb goods outside of the tomb, whereas drawn sketches of their positions inside were usually made first before removal of the material. The roughly contemporary discoveries of Theban tombs to which Schiaparelli also makes reference were: Hatiay (TT 80), found by Daressy in 1896 (published five years later); Mahirper (KV 36), found by Loret in 1899 (published three years later); Yuya and Thuya (KV 46), discovered in 1905 (published by Theodore Davis with Gaston Maspero and others in 1907 and by Quibell in 1908).

Internal chamber of the tomb, photographed at the time of the discovery: in the foreground, bronze lamp on a tall wooden stand.

Schiaparelli was single-minded in his commitment to the growth of the Museo Egizio, almost to a fault.

Internal view of the tomb with furnishings crowded along the short wall.

He was certainly criticised for the fact that as Soprintendenza he had managed to stifle Piedmontese archaeology and research, determined as he was that most of the resources to hand should be directed towards his work in Egypt and the growth of the Museum. However, his raw determination and his taciturn character bely a concern he held for his fellow man; in particular orphans, Italian catholic missionaries, and Italian workers in the American diaspora for whom he tirelessly raised funds to succour. In 1924 he was made a senator, aptly uniting his three ideals (according to his colleage Giovanni Marro): Religion, Fatherland and Science.

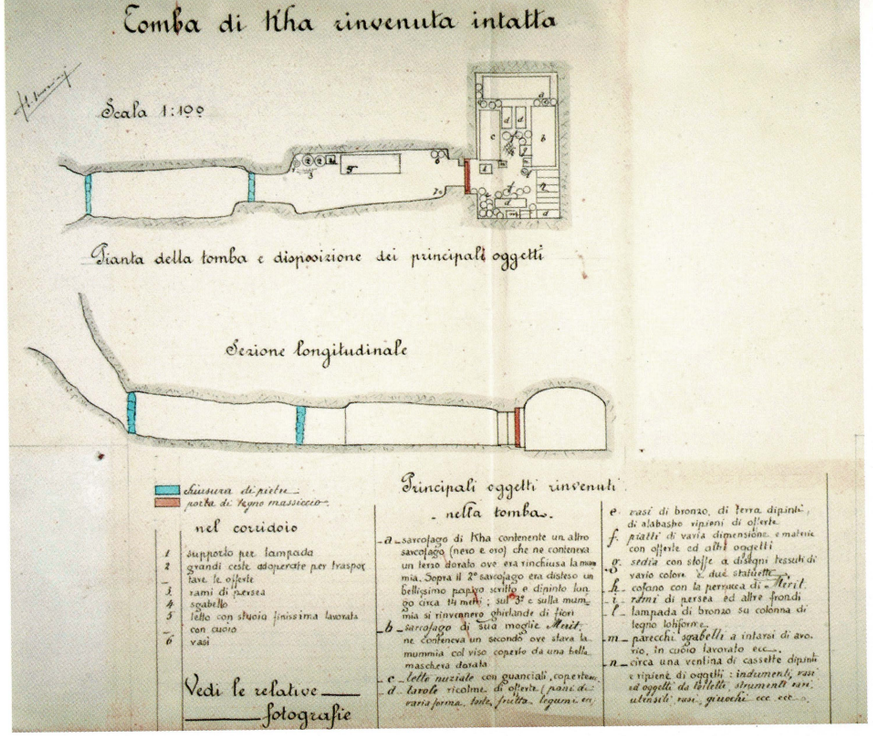
Opening the Tomb of Kha

The tomb of Kha was published by Schiaparelli (1927) five years after the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun. When the archaeologist Howard Carter peered through the opening in the pharaoh's tomb chamber, he reportedly said "it is wonderful". The antiquities inspector Arthur Weigall described the moment on 15 February 1906, when Schiaparelli and his colleagues faced Kha's locked tomb door: "The whole contrivance seemed so modern that Professor Schiaparelli called to his servant for the key, who quite seriously replied, 'I don't know where it is sir'. He then thumped the door with his hand to see whether it would be likely to give; and, as the echoes reverberated through the tomb, one felt that the mummy, in the darkness beyond, might well think that his resurrection call had come".

Tomb of Kha: the door.

Once in, Schiaparelli worked in haste to record and remove the material in three days. Only a single plan drawing noting the disposition of 18 important positions was made by the Egyptologist Francesco Ballerini. For some inexplicable reason, Schiaparelli published another drawing (1:100 scale) *without* the positions of the objects. There are a number of objects which are not covered by Ballerini's drawing nor by the photographs of the inside of the tomb, nor by Schiaparelli's publication. Thus, it is not clear where the small imitation cane table was positioned and where was the *senet*-game (under the pile of boxes in front of the entrance as suggested by Ballerini?). Which headrest belonged to which bed? Where was the footrest?

Howard Carter spent a decade and a half recording and clearing the tomb of Tutankhamun. Queen Hetepheres' tomb at Giza (1925), in



Tomb of Kha: plan indicating the position of 18 notable objects, drawn by Francesco Ballerini.

which only one or two people could work at a time, one lying on a narrow mattress to draw the finds, took most of two years to clear. It appears that Schiaparelli felt vunerable, fearing theft, and could not afford the time to make the expected series of drawings marking all the original positions. Unfortunately, due to his vague description of the tomb in his book (using only three photos of the interior, whereas more were available to him), a scholar's recent proposed location of the finds is deeply flawed. Quibell wrote that the risk of robbery in western Thebes was so great that plans and sketches, photos and packing of Thuya and Yuya's goods were done quickly so that the tomb was emptied in 18 days. Likewise the tomb of Sennefer (1929) was drawn and documented within hours and removed, to the extent that not even the sarcophagus of his consort Nefertiti was opened until some six months later.

The Tomb of Kha and the Museo Egizio

Within five days of the discovery, Schiaparelli wrote a letter to Rome stating that he was inventorying and preparing 50 crates for its transport (in the end there were 93) and its hoped-for entry into Turin. His old professor and good friend Gaston Maspero was the pragmatic Director of the Antiquities Service, who made an effort to regulate the division of finds from excavations and the antiquities market, rather than stop them altogether and seize them. Schiaparelli's friendship with Maspero alone would not have secured for Turin the material from Kha's tomb, which depended on the recommendation from a commission of inspectors examining the material in Alexandria. Possibly, much of the Kha material was regarded as duplicate, certainly after that found in the tomb of Yuya and Thuya. Theodore Davis, who funded the excavation of the latter, stated that his permission to explore did not include an entitlement to any portion of the finds. He described the characteristically generous Maspero and his offer of a share of the Yuya tomb finds, but Davis refused to break up the grave assemblage and preferred to see the intact tomb in Cairo. This was extremely ethical at a time when museums and collectors were racing to build collections. The following year Schiaparelli discovered the tomb of Kha, and perhaps it was thought that many more rich private tombs were to be found. Thus, the Egyptian authorities insisted only on a small division of Kha's finds, so that a bronze lamp and its tall wooden support, breads, blocks of salt and 19 terracotta vases were to be retained by Egypt, whereas everything else could be taken to Turin. By 1922, when the royal tomb of Tutankhamun was discovered, it was decided that nothing in it would be allowed to leave the country, to the dismay of the excavator and his sponsor.

The Publication of the Tomb of Kha

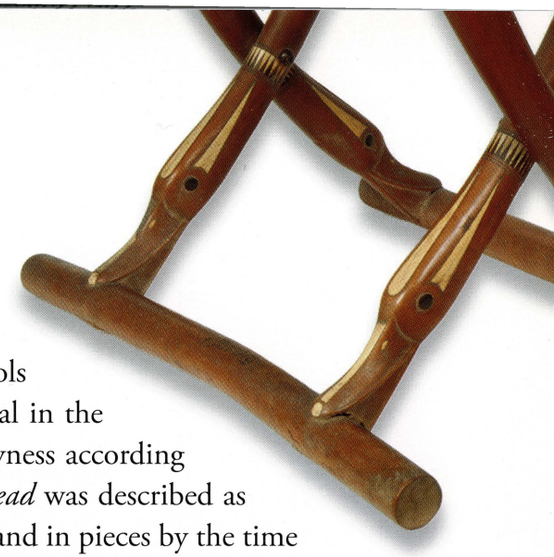
It is somehow inexplicable that Schiaparelli waited so many years to describe the finest intact assemblage of Egyptian material in all of Europe. After a cursory description of the tomb, he turned immediately to his interest in the texts and in particular to the *Book of the Dead*, the 13m papyrus with sacred texts that allowed the deceased and his wife to navigate their way to the Afterlife. Schiaparelli did not reproduce the hieroglyphs (despite an available font) nor a transliteration in the book, and unfortunately never found the time to publish this document fully and separately. He was uneven in his treatment of the tomb objects and even turned his attention to the archaeological *silentium*. The conspicuous absence of large white jars of slender form of the period, suggested to him that there must be a chamber elsewhere, nearby with these pots. The archaeologist Bruyère did find an empty two-metre hole near the funerary chapel, where expected tomb material, including a second Book of the Dead inscribed for Kha and Merit (now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, BN 846) might have originated. Schiaparelli supposed that valuable objects such as a single pedestal table or a gift from King Thutmose III were not buried because these would have been too valuable to deposit there and were kept therefore surely by the living. With regards to a gift from Thutmose III, it is difficult to imagine that Kha could have been active fifty odd years stretching back to that reign.

Schiaparelli's interests in the texts blinded him to some of the wider issues. The fact that much of the furniture had an inscription to Kha's *ka-*

Book of the Dead of Kha: detail.

spirit, led him to generalise that all the coffers and tables were made for the tomb. Perhaps the application of an *inked* funerary inscription deserved further mature consideration. One might forgive Schiaparelli for a variety of tangents ranging from the presence of pebbles in the tomb to the locking device on the door and what he took to be Merit's hair curler, but his faulty notes or memory resulted in a number of mistakes. He claimed that Merit's burial was hastily done based on the fact that her toiletry box had no sealing (it did), that a horn perfume cone was closed with a bone rosette (wood, actually) and that Merit was lying on her left side (photos clearly show her on her back). He attributed many of Kha's belongings to a box that was too small to have accommodated all the objects he listed, including a specifically mentioned comb, of which there is no record (Merit had four combs). He described Kha's sharpening stone in a small chest, in which it patently does not fit. Perhaps the most glaring error Schiaparelli made was his description of the famous leather-bound folding stool with duck-headed feet clutching the crossbar. This he described as biting snakes.

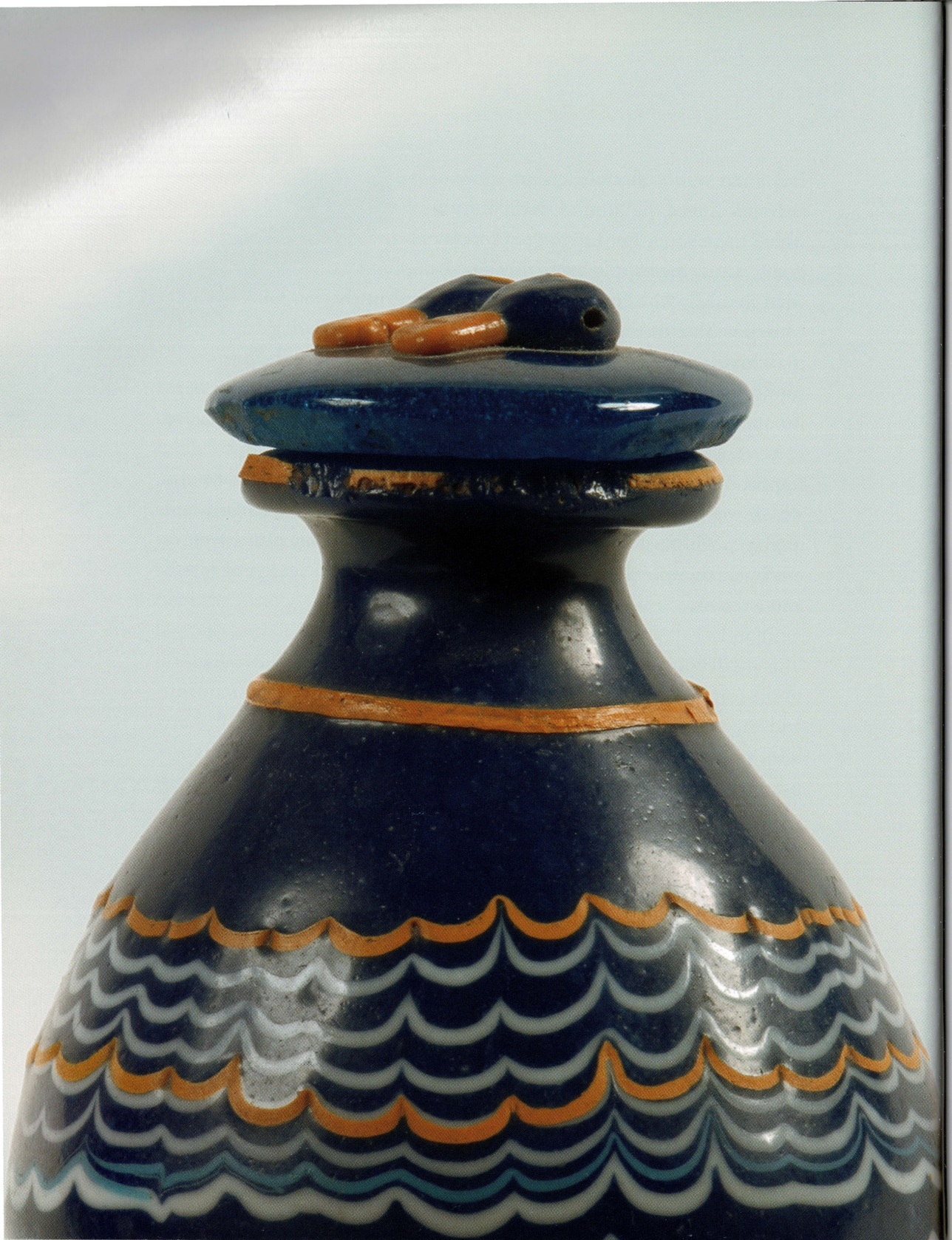
Intermediate mummy-shaped sarcophagus of Kha.



Folding, four-legged campstool: each leg terminates in the shape of a duck head.

It is a sad reality that objects are more often safer under the ground than above it, where the elements enhance the process of decay. Thus, the supple leather stamped stools were to crack within a few months of arrival in the Museum (due to the humidity, and not dryness according to Schiaparelli). The papyrus *Book of the Dead* was described as supple when found, whereas it was cracked and in pieces by the time it entered the Museum. A tall reed table atrophied altogether and had to be replaced with a copy. A workman's rough handling was probably responsible for the damage to Merit's mask and the loss of the left eye, which was later restored. Thankfully, there was little overall significant damage. We must be grateful also that Schiaparelli was not driven to cut open the mummy bindings of Kha and Merit in search of jewels and amulets.

This guidebook of selected items is intended as a general introduction to the tomb of Kha and Merit, but one that will serve scholars, students and the general public alike. Most of the objects from the tomb have been photographed specifically for this publication. The Museo Egizio is now planning to double the space it occupies in the palace in order to enable it to present the works of art under improved conditions, and to display more of the material which deserves attention, but has hitherto lain in storage. During the building works, which are expected to last until 2013, the tomb of Kha will be displayed in one provisional setting and a final definitive one, so that it will always remain on public view.



Catalogue

Stele of Kha

SANDSTONE, PAINTED (CAT. 1618)
H 74,5 x L 63 cm

It is natural in all cultures to mark the place of burial of one's dearly departed with a monument of some sort that also records the name of the deceased and perhaps those of other family members. In Egypt, during the New Kingdom, the crossroads or point where the living 'met' the dead was the funerary chapel, a small cave-like aperture in the hills of the western necropolis or a superstructure tucked in among the many grave monuments. The actual burial chamber was usually under the chapel or under the courtyard in front of the chapel, and this was not visited. It was only re-opened in the case of a subsequent burial of kin. The chapels were often marked over the doorway by a small brick pyramid and capped with a stone *pyramidion*. Embedded in one of the walls was the traditional, usually round-topped, stele that demonstrated the piety of the deceased and the funerary rites, usually conducted by the surviving son or daughter.

This sandstone funerary stele of Kha is decorated in two registers. In the upper register Kha is represented twice, on the left and right, worshipping (with arms upraised) the gods Osiris and Anubis respectively, seated on their thrones. In the lower register Kha and his wife Merit are seated in front of a table piled high with several foodstuffs. The couple's son is represented to the right of the scene with a single arm raised as if in a oratory address. The carving of the figures is in raised relief, whereas the hieroglyphs are in a less labour-intensive sunk relief. The top of the plaque is typically decorated with the protective Horus *wedjat*-eyes with the falcon markings flanking the *shenu*-sign for the whole earth.

A remarkable note about this stele is the fact that it was found and sold by Bernardino Drovetti to the Savoy King Carlo Felice, and arrived in Turin in 1824. Eighty two years later, it would be Ernesto Schiaparelli who would discover the unplundered tomb which was nowhere near the chapel, as

Kha was keen to confound potential thieves. Unfortunately, having suffered some damage and spalling, a misguided effort at restoration has resulted in among other things, modern (pre 1927) colouring of the upper torso of the figure of the son.

Kha's funerary chapel with its painted decoration still stands today. The limestone *pyramidion* that surmounted the brick pyramid encasing the superstructure, with its relief decoration showing Kha worshipping the sun god Re, is in the Louvre.

Outer Coffin of Merit

WOOD, COVERED IN BITUMEN (S. 8517)
H 113,5 x L 228,5 X D 97 CM

The wooden external sarcophagus of Merit is roughly identical to that of Kha, and like his was covered by a sheet. The sarcophagus takes its form from the architecture (and hieroglyph) of a shrine (of Lower Egypt) that has an outward splayed cavetto cornice at the top of its walls and a domed roof (to represent the sky) with two tall projecting end walls. The coffin is made of massive planks and the arched lid is defined along its edge by the cavetto cornice. The whole is covered entirely in a thick black bitumen that still retains its gloss, and is thought by some to have been applied inside the tomb. A torus-moulding has been applied to the top of the walls to complete the architectural effect. Although its base is missing, there is no reason

to doubt that the sarcophagus was intended to be any different from that of Kha (and others) with a sled base that, in principle, would have allowed it to be dragged across the desert scoring a path and displacing the sand as it went (though this is disputed by some, and thought only to have symbolic value). The narrowness of the doorway to the tomb, the absence of the sled base on Merit's coffin and the scored signs at the corner of the coffin have led some to believe that her coffin was assembled in the tomb and was left unfinished. However, it is just as probable that the wide tomb aperture was easily used, but that the doorway was built and sealed after the second inhumation. The signs on the coffin for joining the parts do not convincingly imply assembly in the tomb. More difficult to understand is the absence of the sled base that was, perhaps, taken off and re-used for the transport of Kha's coffin and then left in place, when that coffin was moved into its position on the end wall of the tomb.

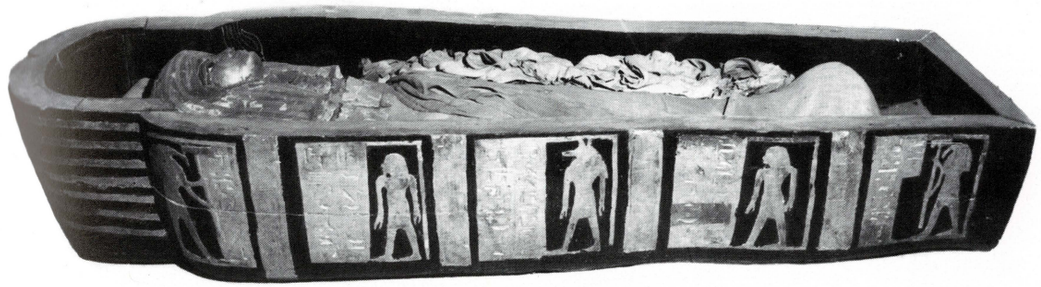
In any case, Merit's coffin, with another sarcophagus within it, was positioned along the long wall of the tomb (opposite the doorway) with a few personal belongings, substantially less than that left for Kha. Her belongings at the time of burial were probably limited to her made up bed (to the left of the doorway), her wig box, her beauty case with its various compartments for cosmetics, two other coffers, a basket with combs, hairpins, sewing kit and dried raisins. In another basket were a fringed textile described by the excavator as a bathrobe, and a strange stick with attached string that has been debated and argued to be a curler for her hair. There might have been a few food baskets left for Merit, but that is not certain. Schiaparelli noted that Merit was probably hastily buried, which is why her beauty box for example was not closed with a mud seal (in fact it was). It is not evident where Merit's sarcophagus was positioned in the tomb initially, but with the second inhumation, this time for Kha, his larger coffin was placed along the end wall, which it almost filled. His high-backed chair with statuette was positioned directly in front of Merit's sarcophagus and much more furniture was packed in and about the tomb.

Inner Coffin of Merit

STUCCOED WOOD, COVERED IN BITUMEN AND LEAF GILDED (S. 8470)
H 80 x L 199 x D 58 cm

Having predeceased her husband, Merit was interred in the anthropoid sarcophagus (nested within the larger shrine-shaped coffin) intended and inscribed for her husband Kha, which was too large for her and had to be adapted. It was covered with a large sheet (with Kha's monogram) and the lid was cleverly closed with a series of wooden pins. Whereas Kha had three coffins, the middle one decorated with bitumen and gilding and the inner coffin entirely gilt, Merit had only two coffins. Her inner coffin was a mixture of the two idioms of Kha. Thus the coffin receptacle was essentially painted with black bitumen with alternating gilded bits, whereas the mummiform lid was completely gilded. First the lid had been prepared with a layer of gesso into which texts and images were modelled and then gold leaf was applied and burnished.

Merit's inner coffin depicts the deceased with arms crossed on the chest



and with a large gold *wesekh*-broad-collar. The head of the lid is rendered 'alive' with the eyes inlaid with coloured glass. At early date, anthropoid coffins did not yet distinguish between the sexes (dimorphism). However, the texts refer only to Kha and not to Merit. The lower half of the coffin is decorated on the exterior with alternating glossy black bitumen and gold leaf, whereas the sky goddess Nut with arms extended in an outline drawing on the interior. According to Schiaparelli, Merit was found lying on her left side (although early pictures show her flat on her back) as if embraced by the goddess. A petite woman, the coffin was too large for her so that rolls of linen were placed around the body to prevent it from rolling about in transport (Schiaparelli only mentions the rolls at the feet, whereas contemporary photos show them to be wedged around the head as well). The mummy has never been unwrapped, but radiography has revealed a small woman (147 cm) with hands crossed at her genitalia, with some damage to her third and fourth vertebra and with a deformation of her pelvis. Two opaque objects were placed on her eyes, she still wears a large broad collar, two pairs of earrings, a stranded belt of beads and shells and rings on her fingers. Another ring was inserted in the linen inside the mask, perhaps forgotten during the mummification process and inserted as an affectionate afterthought.

The outer sides of the coffin are decorated with gilded images of funerary gods such as the four Sons of Horus, who guarded the various organs of the corpse. It is worth noting that the organs were not removed and placed in canopic jars as was usually done elsewhere, perhaps because this was not the local practice in this Theban mortuary.

Funerary Mask of Merit

LINEN STUCCOED AND COVERED IN GOLD LEAF,
INLAID WITH STONE AND COLOURED GLASS (S. 8473)
H 36 x L 34 x D 52 cm

We are all familiar with the famous gold mask of King Tutankhamun. This one was found fitted over Merit's head. Although gold in colour, it was made in an inexpensive linen cartonnage that was gessoed, then covered with gold leaf and inlaid with cut pieces of coloured glass for the eyes, brows, cosmetic stripes and decorative collar. The colourful intarsia of the collar demonstrate the relatively new range of silicious colours that became possible at this date. These glass colours were used to imitate more precious lapis lazuli, turquoise and carnelian gemstones. The blue painted striations of the wig were, perhaps, an economy. Kha himself was not furnished with a golden mask. Was this because of the great cost for such an elaborate mask? The fact that Merit's coffin was not made for her, but initially made for Kha, might suggest that the mask also was intended for him but adapted for Merit.

Certainly this was an object of great artistry and of expensive materials, as coloured glass had only recently been manufactured and then rarely. Gold leaf, though thin, was also of considerable value. Often, the Egyptians simply used the colour yellow ochre to suggest gold. Kha was prepared to forego the same extravagance for himself and be buried without a golden or gold coloured mask.

Merit's fragile mask was slightly crushed when found and possibly further damaged by Schiaparelli's workmen, thereafter requiring restoration of the left eye. After years off view while in conservation, the mask has been recently re-shaped and consolidated. A lower section along the bottom of the mask depicting a vulture with open wings once protected Merit's chest, but now is detached and missing most of its gilding. The slightly upturned eyes of the mask suggested to Schiaparelli that the visage was as if "imploring us to leave her in peace".

Merit's Beauty Case

WOOD, PAINTED (S. 8479)
BOX DIMENSIONS: H 22 x L 29,5 x D 49 cm
VESSELS OF ALABASTER, GLASS, FAIENCE, HORN
(S. 8480, 8481, 8483, 8484, 8486, 8487, 8489, 8490)

Merit could not imagine a life in the Beyond without her beauty case, and it seems that it was an obvious thing for her survivors to insert in the tomb. This remarkable rectangular toilet box with lift-off lid was lined with a second internal lid that covered the internal compartments of different sizes meant to contain the various makeup jars. The outer lid of the box is decorated with a colourful painted chequerboard pattern divided by a band with an inscription, possibly added just before burial, that states that the box is a funerary offering for Merit's spirit.

The coffer is covered in a lively series of colourful patterns applied in a bizarre manner. A chequerboard pattern on the lid repeats itself on the proper left side, below a frieze of lotus buds and blossoms (the lotus symbolised rebirth because the blossom closes at night, but re-blossoms at dawn). This same frieze occurs again along the bottom edge of the proper right side, whereas the top of the panel is decorated with inverted white spiky leaves. The front

Blue glass *alabastron* with cover.

Palm-shaped blue glass kohl pot.

panel is decorated with black and white rectangles within a diamond patterned border imitating bone and ebony intarsia work. A funerary inscription has been painted in black on a white band down the centre of the lid (from front of the box to the back) and between the chequerboard zones on the proper left panel (from top to bottom). It is difficult to imagine that this coffer was always decorated in a riot of patterns, but with bands undecorated for an eventual funerary inscription. It is also unlikely that this box, with its many compartments for the fragile glass vessels, was made just for the tomb. The most probable scenario is that Merit's beauty case was used in life and then both colourfully painted and inscribed before being placed in the tomb.

The five internal compartments were found filled with a variety of vessels in different shapes and materials. Ointments and kohl were regarded as a necessary part of hygiene and these precious materials were contained in luxury vessels such as lidded alabaster jars. One baggy shaped vessel, termed

High-necked blue faience jar.

Alabaster jar with silver handle.

Three covered alabaster jars.

Conical jar of horn with bronze handle and removable base decorated with a rosette.

an *alabastron,* is actually of blue glass, which was a relatively new and rare material. The kohl vessel shaped like a palm tree (other trees were scarce in Egypt) was also of blue glass and likewise with a zig-zagged yellow and white trailed decoration. Egyptians protected themselves from the flies and from sunlight by wearing dark kohl under the eyes (depicted as a long cosmetic stripe on sculptures). The palm was an important symbol of life (the palm frond forms the verb 'to be young') and the tree's long attenuated shape lent itself to the function of a kohl jar that also held a long wooden applicator. Another jar was of the more usual blue faience (a silicious material), but with a tall rippled neck. The taller the neck, the more likely the contents were liquid, as the shape would inhibit evaporation. Another unusual vessel is an animal horn, stoppered at one end with a wooden rosette (erroneously described by Schiaparelli as bone), and equipped with a bronze suspension loop at the other end. Schiaparelli imagined that this was a (greasy) kind of perfume cone, worn at the waist, that would have emitted a scent as one went. However, it may have housed the perfumed cone that was worn on top of the wig by Egyptians of high station, and which is shown in a scene on one of the coffers.

When all the vessels were packed inside the compartments of the box along with a comb (with broken teeth), and the internal lid was put on top for extra security against breakage, the beauty case lid with its wooden lip was secured by means of a cord, which wound in a "figure 8" between the button-shaped knob on the lid and another on the short side of the box and was sealed with a mud sealing (Schiaparelli incorrectly wrote that this box was not sealed).

Merit's Wig and Wig Box

WIG OF HUMAN HAIR (S. 8499)
WOODEN BOX WITH TRACES OF INCOMPLETE DRAWN DECORATION (S. 8493)
H 111 x L 49,3 x D 49 cm

It never ceases to surprise the Museum visitors to see that Merit was very much the lady with the same beauty preoccupations as modern women. She probably wore her hair short, but donned a long, elaborately crimped wig in the company of others. The wig is composed of human hair which is about 54 cm long. It is designed with a central parting and crimped long tresses that are plaited at the ends. Three long thick plaits appear at the back and two thin plaits frame the face. An elaborate inner system of knots and weaves holds the different parts of the wig together. This 'enveloping hair style', in which the ears were covered, was popular during the second half of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Merit is even pictured wearing this wig in the first scene of the *Book of the Dead* papyrus, which was deposited in the tomb with the subsequent burial of her husband.

The tall wooden box, which once housed Merit's wig, is the shape of a generic type of shrine. The lid (sloping towards the rear) closes against a

palmetto cornice. It was secured by means of a cord which was wound in a "figure 8" between the mushroom shaped knob on the lid and another similar on the front panel of the box.

A sunk relief funerary offering formula occurs on the lid (written from the front towards the back of the box): "A funerary offering of Osiris, the great God, Lord of Eternity, that he may make an offering of oxen, birds and everything to the spirit of Merit". A briefer version appears in two columns at the front of the box. There is an aborted attempt at decorating the box by perhaps up to three separate artists working on different faces. Thus, the cavetto cornice with its alternating coloured bars, is only finished on the left side, an inked black net pattern was begun (from the top down) on the right, and an unfinished sketch with figures appears on the rear.

Two parallel wooden crossbeams on the inside, both covered by a linen cloth, held Merit's wig. A few plaits of hair and strands became detached and were found on the floor of the wig box.

Merit's Bed

WOOD, PAINTED, FIBRE BASE (S. 8629)
H 66,5 x L 177 x D 76,5 CM
KHA'S FOOTREST (S. 8522)

Merit's bed is almost identical, except smaller than Kha's bed, if we have interpreted correctly which one belongs to whom. An unfinished funerary inscription on the side rail does not give her name, but the bed's smaller size can be an identifying factor. Kha's bed was too large to fit in the tomb chamber itself so that it was left in the antechamber passage just outside the door. Like other known Egyptian beds, Merit's has a rectangular footboard and not a headboard. For purposes of comfort, the base of the bed has a central rectangular cut-out that is filled with woven fibres. Two bowed transverse panels ensured that should the fibres give way, the occupant would not drop to the floor. The bed rests on lion feet, raised on cylindrical wooden 'pads' painted red, while the rest of the bed is painted white, unlike Kha's bed which was mostly left in the natural wood colour with the side rails stained white. One notes that the animal legs of the head end of the bed are straight, and the rear legs under the footboard are articulated with shanks just like the rear legs of a lion.

The ancient Egyptian normally slept on his or her side with head raised and supported by a lunate-shaped headrest that was positioned under the neck. Here the headrest attributed to Merit is covered with linen for more comfort, whereas the second headrest, presumably belonging to Kha, is uncovered (unfortunately the exact positions were not recorded). Merit's bed was displayed with a number of layers of bedding that ranged from fine to heavy linen with large loops. Unfortunately, the weight of the fabrics and years of exposure to dust, and later

artificial lighting, has taken its toll on these textiles.

If Merit's bed was placed in the tomb, as one imagines, at the time of her death, it would have necessarily been moved out again in order to make room for the passage of Kha's sarcophagus. The fact that Kha's own bed did not fit in the chamber suggests that Kha did not plan the space to accommodate all the contents in an optimal arrangement.

Although both Merit's and Kha's beds were not very high, a low footrest with an inscription for Kha was included in the tomb. Schiaparelli said it was linked to the beds, but did not indicate which one (whereas in the tomb of King Tutankhamun footrests were associated with thrones). If indeed this footrest was associated with the bed and not with Kha's throne-like chair, then Kha seemingly did not want to put his feet directly onto the floor before getting into or out of bed. Perhaps the footrest was just high enough for him to bend over and adjust his sandals, a simple but helpful addition to the bedroom.

Merit's bed with various layers of sheets and covers of fine and heavy linen (now damaged) and headrest upholstered with linen.

Bed rail: detail of the unfinished funeral inscription.

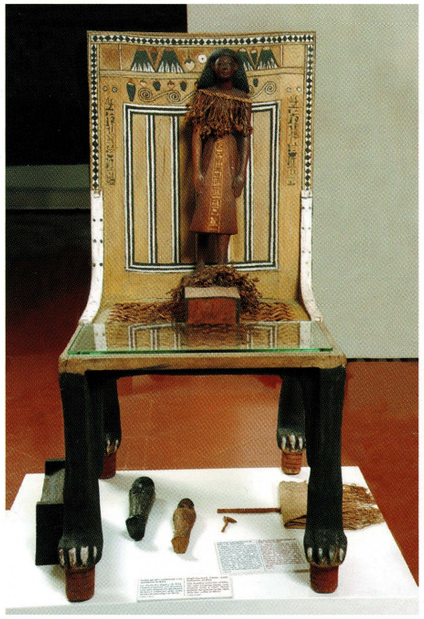
Kha's High-backed Chair

WOOD, PAINTED (S. 8333)
H 91 x L 44,5 x D 55,5 cm

STATUETTE, WOOD (S. 8335)
H 48 x L 12 x D 27,5 cm

BLACK STONE SHAWABTI (S. 8337), PALE WOOD SHAWABTI (S. 8339),
MODEL COFFIN (S. 8338), MODEL HOE (S. 8340),
MODEL CARRYING POLE (S. 8341), WOVEN TEXTILE (S. 8528)

Kha's high-backed regal wooden chair was positioned in the tomb directly in front of Merit's coffin, and was carefully covered with a small textile woven with floral motives, set with a wooden statuette of Kha, along with two smaller *shawabti*-figures, a miniature hoe and a model sarcophagus. The only known statue of Kha (there was no statuette of Merit) is shown striding with hands lowered and with palms resting on the apron of the kilt in a sign of profound humility. Kha wears a shoulder-length wig of two layers, striated at the top and plaited below. A garland of small real flowers adorns the chest of the figure and another was draped on the base. A funerary prayer in yellow pigment appears on the kilt.



Normally one would expect to find, as in contemporary tombs, a box full of hundreds of *shawabti*-figures, for each deceased person. But here there were only two, both for Kha, along with a small model of Kha's exterior shrine-shaped coffin. In ancient Egypt everyone was expected to work the land following the Nile flood. Death provided no excuse from these duties, so that mummiform *shawabti*-figures

High-backed chair with the statuette of Kha, *shawabtis* of black stone and light-coloured wood, model of a sarcophagus painted black, miniature wooden hoe, miniature balance and cloth.

Facing page: statuette of Kha, detail of the bust with the garland of dried flowers.

were devised in the Middle Kingdom to 'answer the call to work' on behalf of the deceased. This is confirmed by Chapter VI of the *Book of the Dead*, which is inscribed in seven lines and filled with yellow pigment on the dark stone *shawabti* of Kha, that was found upright and leaning against the back of the chair. The second *shawabti*-figure of Kha is of light coloured wood, painted yellow with black details on the head, the text incised and painted blue. This second *shawabti* was found inside the model coffin, which is black just like the actual external bitumen coffins. Two miniature agricultural

Statuette of Kha, detail of the inscription on the base and the garland of dried flowers.

tools were also within the tiny coffin. The wooden pointed bladed hoe, needed to hack at the earth after the inundation of the Nile, has a gentle s-curved ergonomic handle. A horizontal carrying pole from which one may suppose that two woven baskets (not extant) once hung, was also there. Seed bags for 'planting' are usually depicted on the back of the shoulders of the *shawabti*-figures.

Kha's chair is related to the beds in its use of fore and rear leonine paws for the feet and the cut out seat with woven fibres for comfort. The solid seat back is decorated along the border with a black and white diamond pattern, imitating ebony and ivory intarsia. Inverted lotus blossoms and buds, clusters of grapes and running spirals are depicted in two horizontal friezes as part of the upper frame of the chair back. A large black and white rectangle divided into six vertical sections decorates the chair back proper, perhaps signifying the rails of an open-backed chair. The yellow painted ground of the chair back and seat may suggest gold. The chair was destined for Kha as is evident by the two vertical inscriptions. Schiaparelli believed that it was purposefully made for the tomb as a replica of a more precious one that was left behind for the living. However, the Egyptians were forever making things to imitate more precious ones, and not only as a tomb economy. Thus, gilding made objects appear to be of solid gold, blue glass would replace precious lapis lazuli, *trompe l'oeil* painted decoration would suggest knotted hard woods and so on. The presence of a funerary inscription does not mean that the chair was made exclusively for the tomb, also because funerary inscriptions appear on other objects most certainly used in life, such as Merit's beauty case. It is more probable that the chair was used in life and then colourfully painted with a thick impasto and inscribed for Kha's use in the Afterlife. Both Kha and Merit were represented seated on such chairs in scenes on coffers, therefore Merit's chair never made it into the tomb.

The Coffins of Kha

OUTER SHRINE-SHAPED COFFIN
WOOD COVERED WITH BITUMEN (S. 8210)
H 160 x L 300 x D 110 cm

MIDDLE SARCOPHAGUS
WOOD, GILDED AND COVERED WITH BITUMEN (S. 8316/01)
H 116 x L 233 x D 88 cm

INNER SARCOPHAGUS
WOOD, STUCCOED AND GILDED, BITUMEN ON INSIDE (S. 8429)
H 78 x L 202,5 x D 68 cm

The massive shrine-shaped external sarcophagus of Kha is roughly identical to that of Merit, with the exception that it has the sled base, missing on that of Merit. The middle anthropoid-shaped coffin is largely covered in black bitumen and depicts the deceased with a gilded face, with glass inlaid eyes, a long wig with gilded striations, a large gold, red and green *wesekh*-broadcollar and with arms crossed and gold fists emerging from the bindings. Vertical and horizontal gilded bindings, with prayer texts in raised relief, are meant to imitated the mummy linen bindings. The mourning goddess Nephthys is depicted seated on the gold-hieroglyph on the crown of the head with her arms raised in a gesture of protection. A winged gilded raised relief vulture for the goddess Nekhbet protects the chest of the coffin. The sides of the coffin are decorated with images of Thoth, Anubis and the canopic deities with their respective invocation formulae. These images apparently act as substitutes for the expected canopic jars that are conspicuously absent from Kha's tomb. Instead, the couple's internal organs were desiccated and replaced in the mummies' body cavities. An actual floral garland was draped over this coffin (S. 8430).

The inner mummiform sarcophagus is completely gilded, by means of gold leaf

Middle mummy-shaped coffin of Kha.

Facing page: External sarcophagus of Kha in the form of a shrine on a sledge base.

applied to a fine stucco layer, on which figures and inscriptions were previously realized in raised relief. Again, the iconography suggests a mummy with a lively mask-like face with glass inlaid eyes. The golden bands on the body recall the fabric strips that bound the shroud around the embalmed corpse. As on the middle coffin, an incised figure of the vulture-goddess Nekhbet with spread wings appears below the crossed fists.

The hieroglyphic inscriptions are arranged in bands and panels, and they include traditional spells and prayers that are common to New Kingdom coffins. In the middle of the cover, there is a spell addressed to the sky-goddess Nut: "Words spoken by the Osiris, the Overseer of Works, Kha, justified: oh mother Nut, you cover me and see that I am placed between the imperishable stars that there are in your chest, and see to it that I do not die. The Overseer of Works, Kha, justified".

As on the sides of the middle coffin and the anthropoid coffin of Merit, the jackal-god Anubis, the four Sons of Horus and the ibis-god Thoth appear with their traditional spells. Words spoken by Osiris and Nut occur along the right and left borders of the coffin respectively. The grieving kneeling goddesses Isis and Nephthys are depicted at the foot and the head of the coffin. The inside of the coffin is completely covered in bitumen, lacking the figure of the sky-goddess Nut drawn on Merit's coffin. Another floral garland was draped also on the cover of this coffin as a final gesture towards the deceased (S. 8319).

Internal mummy-shaped coffin of Kha.

The Book of the Dead

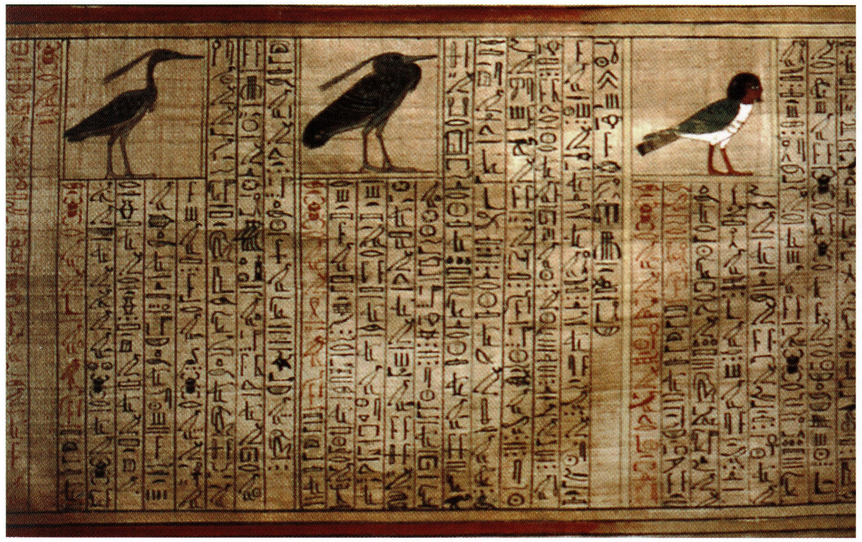
CYPERUS PAPYRUS (S. 8438)
H 34 x L 1380 cm

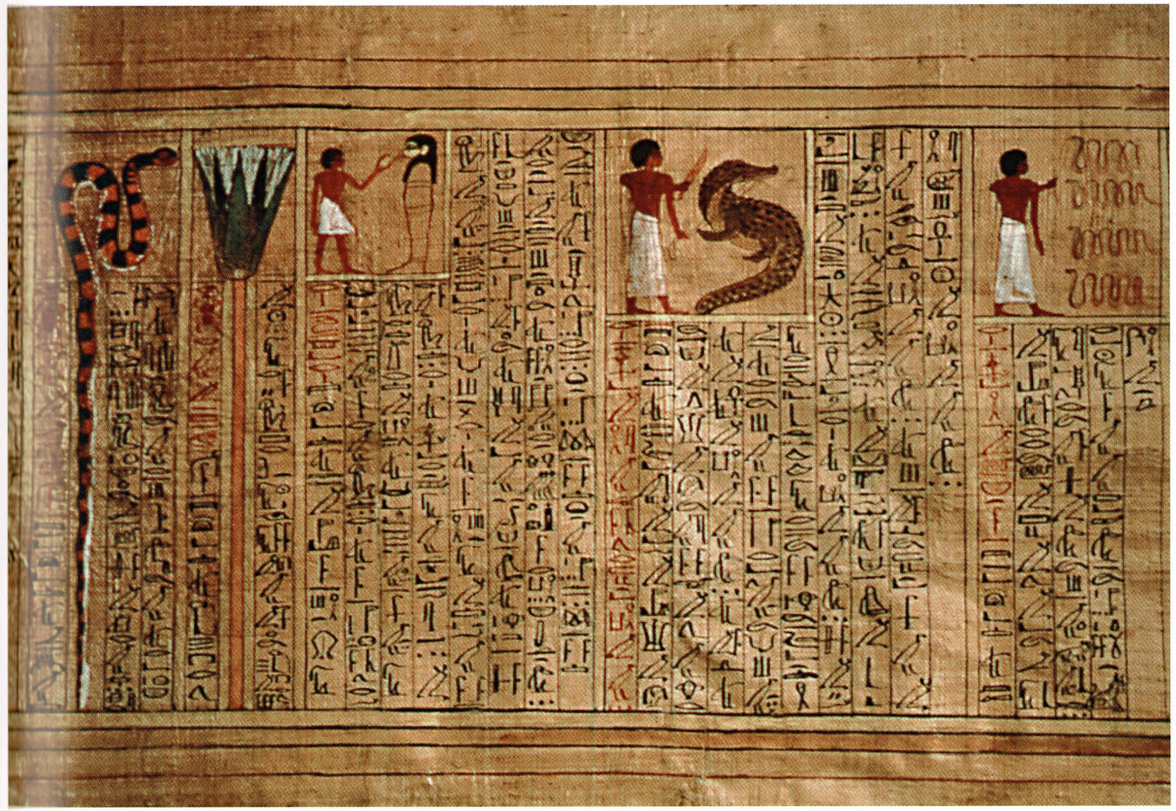
The *Book of the Dead* was a text written on a long papyrus roll that functioned as a kind of navigational guide through the Afterlife. It was normally composed of columns of texts with illustrations, derived from diverse sources such as: Coffin Texts, Pyramid Texts, Judgement in the Afterlife and sun hymns. The selection of chapters for a *Book of the Dead* was often individual, whereas scholars today tend to rely on a long Ptolemaic text (actually in the Museo Egizio) for the sequential order of the chapters, never fixed in antiquity. Kha's *Book of the Dead* is 13.80 m long and contains 33 chapters (32 according to Schiaparelli). It was found loosely folded on the second sarcophagus. At the extreme left end of the papyrus (the hieroglyphs are rightwards facing), Kha and his wife Merit (she is served by the book too) appear in white diaphanous garments with waxy perfume cones on their heads, in an attitude of adoration before the shrine of the god Osiris.
Husband to Isis and father of Horus,

Osiris was murdered by his brother Seth. Osiris became a funerary king and 'Foremost of the Westerners' because he ruled over the West, where the Egyptians buried their dead. He is represented here as a royal mummy holding the *heqa*-sceptre, for authority, a flail, perhaps a ruler's fly whisk, and the *was*-sceptre for power. Kha demonstrates his piety with the offering of a table piled high with foods before the Osiris shrine. The final judgment scene, or weighing of the soul (*psychostasis*), known from other papyri of later date, is absent from this early *Book of the Dead*.

The text refers to an idyllic summer house with a garden in which the north wind blows, and follows with a series of desired transformations into a phoenix, a gold sparrow hawk, a swallow etc. Prayers seek the wished for Opening of the Mouth rite, the freeing of the legs from the mummy bindings so as to hunt, and the drinking of water as a relief from the heat. The second half of the text glorifies the deceased and provides bread, beer, oxen and goose etc (Chap. 148).

Schiaparelli noted the rare mention of Kha's father Aui (4 times), the absence of his mother, and deducted that Kha was a man of modest background, without inherited titles, who was perhaps self made. Remarkably, another *Book of the Dead* in the Bibliothèque





Nationale of Paris (BN 846), whose archeological provenance is unknown, may have been meant for Merit, as her name occurs alone several times in spells, whereas Kha's appears only once. At this early date, it would have been unique for a woman to have her own *Book of the Dead*. The Parisian book may have come from a two metre hole in the forecourt of Kha and Merit's funerary chapel, found empty by the archaeologist Bernard Bruyère. On the other hand, it is possible that two *Books of the Dead* were composed for each of the couple, but that only one was used, serving both figures, the other set aside for eventual re-use (and substitution of the names).

Kha's Personal Effects

LIST OF OBJECTS SUPPOSEDLY FROM COFFER (S. 8412) AS SUPPLIED BY SCHIAPARELLI

3 BASKETS

LEATHER BAG (S. 8369) THAT CONTAINED:
2 HANDLED RAZORS (S. 8370-71), RAZOR WITHOUT HANDLE (S. 8372),
2 HOOKED BLADES (S. 8373-74)

SCISSORS (S. 8376)
SHARPENING STONE (S. 8398)
ALABASTER VASE WITH SALVES (S. 8385)
TWO ARMLETS (S. 8399, S. 8400)

SMALL BOX WITH SLIDING LID (S. 8378) THAT CONTAINED:
SEWING KIT (S. 8379), WOODEN COMB (NEVER RECORDED IN THE MUSEUM),
VARIOUS CANE TUBES, SMALL KOHL VESSEL IN THE SHAPE OF A CUPBOARD (S. 8389),
FRUIT STONES AND PEBBLES

PEBBLES
LIBATION JAR (S. 8368)
FOLDING CUBIT WITH LEATHER BAG (S. 8390-91)
2 PALETTES (S. 8387-88)
4 WOODEN PESTLES (?) (S. 8364-67)
CHISEL (S. 8362)
DRILL (S. 8363)
HATCHET (S. 8386)
BALANCE (S. 8397)
FLASK WITH CORD (S. 8375)
FAIENCE BOWL (S. 8230)
BRONZE VESSEL (OF SILVER COLOUR (HIGH-TINNED)) (S. 8394)
BOWL (S. 8401)
BRONZE STRAINER (OF SILVER COLOUR (HIGH-TINNED)) (S. 8392)
BRONZE STRAINER (S. 8393)
3 PAIR OF SANDALS (ONE PAIR NOT RECORDED IN THE MUSEUM)
WRITING TABLET (?) (S. 8402)
2 CYLINDRICAL CANES OF RESIN (S. 8395-96)
4 BLOCKS OF SALT
4 BLOCKS OF CEMENT (NEVER RECORDED IN THE MUSEUM)

Kha's personal effects were mainly contained within a single unremarkable white painted wooden chest. Under three lidded baskets, filled with cumin and juniper seeds, Schiaparelli found Kha's toilettries. A leather shaving bag was filled with bronze blades, some curved handles, others were long and hooked for cutting by means of tearing. Also included were a beautiful pair of scissors, whose handle takes the form of a horse in a flying gallop (horses were introduced to Egypt shortly before the New Kingdom), a sharpening stone and an open alabaster bowl filled with a paste. A small box with a sliding lid held a number of reed kohl tubes (men also wore kohl around the eyes), a piece of bark with sewing needles, another small cupboard-shaped kohl container with ebony applicator and a bunch of pebbles and fruit pits (Schiaparelli mentioned a comb, but if present, it never made it to the Museum).
According to Schiaparelli, many of Kha's professional tools were also placed in this same box. Most prominent was the hinged and folding measuring cubit rod stowed in a red Moroccan leather carrying case with suspension hoop. The 'Royal Egyptian Cubit' is one of the earliest tools for precise measurement from Egypt, and it was meant to be equal to the length of the forearm from the bent elbow to the tip of the extended middle finger, divided into seven palms composed of four digits each (for a total of 28 digits). This clever hinged folding cubit is flat on the inside folding plane and has five facets of which three are incised. It is divided in seven palms, the last one of which is divided into four digits.

White wood coffer, containing personal objects of Kha.

Bronze razors.

Sharpening stone.

Scissors with handle in the form of a galloping horse.

Alabaster jar containing ointment.

Small box with sliding cover.

There were two wooden palettes with cakes of colour in round depressions and reeds inserted into a central slot. One of these palettes is beautifully inscribed by a friend (?), Amenmes, the Overseer of the Treasury during the reign of King Thutmose IV. A single rectangular stuccoed board may have functioned as a scribal tablet, but without a raised border, wax could not have been contained on the panel. Perhaps this was used instead like a clip board, as a support for papyrus, alternatively as an internal lid of a coffer (see Merit's beauty case). A series of wooden mushroom-shaped objects, thought by Schiaparelli to be pestles for grinding colour, might equally have served as blotters or tools to smooth papyrus.

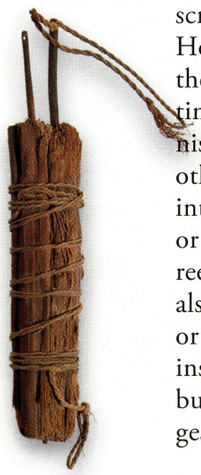
Kha was not simply a man who worked at the draughting table, but also one who applied his hand to the task, as is evident by the inclusion of a number of tools such as a mechanical drill. This is composed of a long wooden shaft with an extending bronze pin. At the top of the shaft is a hollow mushroom-shaped top that could spin and be guided (when the drill shaft, wound with a bow-string, was 'drawn') causing the drill bit to spin and bore. (A similar tool, but with a wooden drill head, was found in the tomb of King Tutankhamun, and was used as a fire-drill to light torches). A long narrow wooden instrument inscribed for Kha (that opens, but is empty)

with a circular protrusion may have served as a balance (in the style of the Chinese). Cakes of cement and salt (Schiaparelli claimed that Kha once worked in the salt mines) were also among these work items. Particularly indicative of Kha's operative abilities is the carpenter's hatchet with the blade showing evidence of use, and bound by leather straps to the s-shaped handle. There is no doubt that Kha used this tool in life (unlike the tools found in Tutankhamun's tomb), because not only is the worn blade punched with his cipher, but a funerary inscription in black ink was also added to the upper face.

A number of other objects also packed into the box may have been intended for special occasions. A metal *phiale*-bowl, an *alabastron*-shaped vase and a strainer, were described by Schiaparelli as electrum. However it seems more likely that these are bronze alloys with a high tin content that results in the tarnished silver effect. The strainers (another one is coppery in colour) were intended perhaps for straining wine or aromatic and medical herbs. Two reeds filled with a black resin were also in the box. A fine faience bowl or drinking cup is decorated on the inside in manganese black with lotus buds and blossoms. It has been suggested that this type of faience bowl signifies the primaeval watery abyss from which the cosmos (Egypt) emerged. Another interesting and surely ritual jar is a buff coloured one in the shape of a lotus at the top and base which is perforated, perhaps for pouring a libation or for use as a funnel. The fact that the handle was broken off in antiquity, and yet the vase was included in the tomb, suggests that it was of significant importance to Kha. More modest is the simple pottery 'pilgrim's flask' decorated on its rounded body with concentric circles, that was found with rope still attached (a second flask was also found in the tomb).

The remaining items in the box of Kha's personal effects included three pair of leather sandals, which were possibly treated after discovery with paraffin wax in order to consolidate them, and two faience armlets.

Leather sandals.



Sewing set of needles in a cane holder.

Folding royal cubit.

Wooden instrument, perhaps a balance.

Writing tablet (?).

Two wooden writing palettes for scribes, with cakes of colour and reed pens.

Carpenter's axe: the curved wooden handle is fastened to the bronze hatchet blade with strips of leather.

Mechanical drill with a wooden shaft and long bronze drill bit.

Bronze chisel.

Pestles to grind colours, blotters or used to smooth the surface of papyrus scrolls.

Blocks of salt.

Folded linen cloths.

Schiaparelli thought the latter were worn on the ankles, but this is uncertain as they would be more likely to shatter there than on the upper arms. Armlets were usually worn as pairs. Sometimes a faience armlet was paired on both arms with a metal one (often a royal gift to distinguished citizens) for a bichrome effect. An x-ray of the mummy of Kha demonstrates that he wears a single metal (presumably gold) armlet.

It is difficult to accept that all these objects came out of a single chest as attributed by Schiaparelli, but this might represent a memory lapse on his part.

The rest of Kha's belongings were distributed around the tomb. Although we have spoken of many objects supplied with a suspension hoop for possible wear at the waist, no belts have been found in the tomb. Kha's seventeen tunics (ranging from thin to heavy) were packed in a number of other chests. He had some fifty triangular loincloths, many of which were monogrammed (in ink or stitching). Most had been laundered and folded neatly (included some heavily worn and holed ones), but some dirty ones were kept separately. The presence of Kha's monogram on his knickers may suggest that he availed himself of a laundry service. No doubt he wished his loincloths, and no others, to come back to him. Among the stacks of clothing were some seven knotted sets, composed of thin undergarment, overgarment and underpants, not yet laundered. Four large shawls were also set into the tomb along with smaller linens that might have served as kilts. A number of forked (to rest the thumb) walking sticks, some with bronze tips at the base

Facing page:
Bronze vase with two strainers.

Bronze *phiale*.

Vase for libations.

Terracotta travel flask, decorated with concentric circle motifs, with carrying cord.

Faience dish decorated with lotus flowers and buds.

Faience bracelets.

Cabinet-shaped container for antimony powder with ebony applicator.

were also set in the tomb. One remarkable piece of kit was Kha's travelling mat. This well-woven mat is like Japanese versions, but trimmed in leather. Another smaller mat once attached to the larger one originally may have formed a bag for packing personal effects. At the opposite pole of luxury was a (non-folding) cubit rod covered in gold foil with an elaborate inscription celebrating a victory of King Amenhotep II and the subsequent consecration of a small temple. This commemorative measuring rod was found in (an unspecified) chest, and not among the immediate personal effects of Kha, presumably because it was not considered a useful tool. It may have been a gift from the king to Kha for having worked on the temple.

Decorated Coffer

WOOD, PAINTED (S. 8212)
H 34 x L 44 x D 30 cm

Some twelve textiles and a small fringed rug were carefully packed in this decorated wooden coffer with a pedimental lid. The box blazes in a riot of colours and patterns with an alternating triglyph border along the base as the singular unifying ornament. In a central scene on one of the long sides of the chest, Kha and Merit are depicted seated at the right on high-backed chairs (like the one found in the tomb) before an offering table piled with foods. They are shown elevated on a green pedestal (signifying their other-worldliness) decorated with vertical stripes. Their son, wearing a white kilt, stands before the offering table presenting a lotus bouquet. A similar scene appears on two other coffers: in one case the son of Kha and Merit makes an offering to his parents, whereas in the other case he is joined by his sister or wife.

The opposite long side shows a checkerboard pattern as on the short sides, but with the addition of a central rectangle decorated with a *trompe*

l'oeil wood grain pattern, that re-occurs in a section on both sides of the roof and on the rear pediment. The pitched roof of the coffer is decorated on one long side with rosettes and on the other with a chequerboard pattern. It was opened by means of lifting. It was secured closed with a cord, which wound in a "figure 8" between the mushroom shaped knob on the roof and another similar on the short side. The cord was once sealed with a mud stamped sealing with a cartouche (illegible). The chest stood off the ground on four short feet. The long sides reveal an interesting bent cane decoration along the lower edge of the coffer. The central scene decoration is specifically funerary. It is certainly unlikely that the box and lid would have been decorated, leaving one side free for an eventual funerary scene! It is probable that these chests were decorated specifically for the tomb, though they were already in Kha's possession and in use during life. The presence of three different types of opening construction in these pedimental chests suggests that these were made by different workshops and possibly acquired over a long period of time. Unlike the other flat-topped coffers, these pedimental shaped chests could not be stacked easily, taking up more space, and consequently were regarded of higher status value.

Imitation Cane Table

WOOD (S. 8432)
H 32,5 x L 27 x D 48 cm

Two long and low tables made of split canes woven together and covered with breads in a variety of forms, some wrapped with palm fronds presumably to keep them fresh, were found in Kha and Merit's tomb. Bowls with grains and dates, meat, bricks of salt, reeds of garlic and numerous stoppered vessels also stood nearby. Persea branches were strewn all over.
Another taller but smaller table, ideally suited to be moved around the house and set before visiting guests, one which has subsequently disintegrated, was also found in the tomb. It may be presumed that low cane tables were the equivalent of inexpensive bamboo tables of today.

The Egyptians were masters of taking an object and translating it into another material. Thus, a beautiful small rectangular table is made of wood, but carved to imitate canes tied together. Whereas the Egyptian artisans normally took an expensive item and copied it into a cheaper material (*i.e.* lapis lazuli replaced with blue glass), here the artisan has chosen a banal everyday furnishing and done the opposite by translating it into a sculpted wooden table of high value.

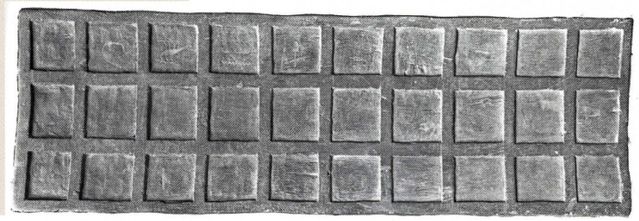
Long, low cane table covered with various loaves of bread.

Remarkably, Schiaparelli only made passing mention of this table: "Also in wood is the pretty table which looks like a piece of garden furniture, no more than 33 centimetres high…". Although they look good together and the table has been associated with the *senet*-board game in the Museum, this is not certain to have been the case in the tomb.
Unfortunately, Schiaparelli did not describe the position of this table, nor did Ballerini in his plan of "the disposition of the principle objects".

Senet Board Game

WOOD (S. 8451 /01)
H 9 x L 13,5 x D 43 cm

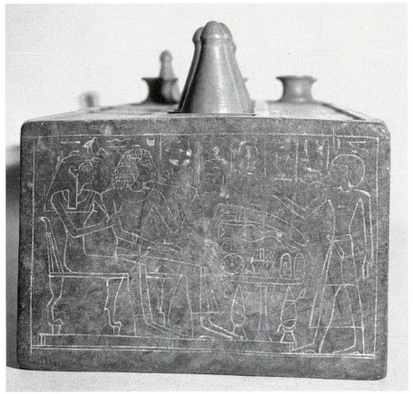
The Egyptian board game *senet* was played throughout Egyptian history for over three millennia, but despite its famous representation in the tomb of Queen Nefertari, few complete sets survive. The game is composed of three rows of ten squares, and is conceived as a race game for two persons using the random factor of an ancient dice known as an *astragalus* (animal knucklebone with four distinctive sides). The object of the game was to move the draughtsmen in the same direction down the length of the top row, to reverse direction in the middle and again in the bottom row. The *senet* game was usually, as here, on the underside of the board box whereas another type of game, referred to as the Asiatic Game of Twenty Squares, had the predominant position on the upper face of the box. Remarkably, a papyrus in Turin is decorated with three full-size game boards (two *senet*), which was meant to be folded in order to create three working flat-style (as opposed to box) games. The inclusion of ritual *senet* texts suggests a cultic use for the papyrus. In a tomb context, the *senet*-game was deadly serious, because according to Chapter 17 of the *Book of the Dead*, the winner of the game would emerge with a living *ba*-soul. Recent analysis of *senet* boards (also carved as graffiti in the tombs) and the Turin papyrus, suggests that the religious version of the *senet* game (recreation and ritual



were not necessarily mutually exclusive), played in or near the tomb, was a means for the living to communicate with the dead in order to assist the passage of the *ba*-spirit.

This box-shaped wooden game is usefully provided with a pull-out drawer for storing the game pieces. A sliding bolt kept the drawer from opening inadvertently when the game was being carried. The wooden elements of the board game were carefully joined by means of mortise and tenon joints.

Schiaparelli described this game as a hand-me-down gift from a certain Benermerit, a man of high station, who was Overseer of the Treasury and of the King's Works. It was given to the second owner Neferhebef, who held titles similar to those of Kha, and who passed the game on to Kha. However, this sequence of individuals is actually a family. An incised scene on the rear short side of the box depicts the deceased couple, Neferhebef and wife Tauioun, seated at an offering table before which their son Benermerit conducts the funerary rites. It is this same Neferhebef whose name appears on one of the walking sticks in Kha's tomb. A certain Neferheb, perhaps a variation of the same name, appears on the focal short wall of Kha and Merit's funerary chapel. The excavator Bruyère steered away from identifying Neferheb as Kha's father, based on Schiaparelli's assertion that Kha's father was a certain Fou or Foui (actually Schiaparelli named him as Aui). In any case, Neferheb(ef) was certainly of significance to Kha. The enigma remains about the mechanism that resulted in an object dedicated by a son to his dead parents, making its way into the tomb of another man or relative.



Stools

WOOD, PAINTED (S. 8510, S. 8511)
H 39 x L 41 x D 32 cm

COVERING RUGS (S. 8520, S. 8521)
H 43 x L 70 cm

LION LEGGED STOOL (S. 8614)
COMMODE (S. 8513)
TWO LEATHER COVERED STOOLS (S. 8507, S. 8508)

White stool with woven seat.

Facing page: white stool with fringed carpet-like, linen seat cover.

The most commonly found furniture in Egypt is the low stool, which is also depicted in tomb wall paintings. A total of ten stools were placed in Kha's tomb. There were four elegant white painted acacia wooden stools, another slightly more robust example with lion paw feet, two brown leather-bound stools with spooled legs, one folding stool and two low thick and rustic looking tripod stools of the type used by artisans in workshops. Common to all the stools is the concavity of the seat. All but one of the elegant white-painted stools have a central fibre-woven panel (like the beds and Kha's high-backed chair), whereas one has a wood-panelled seat. These white stools vary in their dimensions and the concavity of the seats, but all were given structure and strength by means of a series of diagonal, vertical and horizontal square-section struts (except for the stool with leonine feet).

Brown leather-upholstered stool with turned legs, decorated with metal foil.

Unfortunately, the leather, described by Schiaparelli as red Moroccan with a stamped decoration, desiccated within months of arrival in the Museum (according to Schiaparelli due to the humidity in Turin (!)).

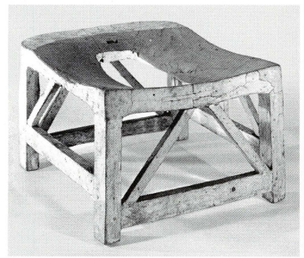
White stool, legs terminating in the form of lion paws.

Finally another stool (painted white), actually found in the antechamber where Kha's bed was set, has been remarked upon by many. This is a thickly cut and well used low stool with a cut-out opening on the seat that was subsequently narrowed with the insertion of an extra wooden panel. Some struts are missing. This is thought to be a commode, the only one of its kind from Egypt.

Low, white stool with an opening in the seat.

They show sign of wear, and in one case two rails are missing, indicating use in life. Two of these elegant stools might have been made more comfortable to use with a fringed linen seat cover, of 'bow-weave' stitch, in which long linen loops were inserted into the weave to obtain a 'carpet-effect' (also called 'fur-effect'). The same type of textile was found on Merit's bed. One further acacia stool differs from the others in that the four legs are slightly more massive and terminate in leonine paws on cylindrical pads (like the beds and the high-backed chair).

Two wooden stools with leather-covered seats are unusual in the Egyptian repertoire of furniture. These stools were left in their original colour thanks to a coat of ancient transparent varnish, whereas the legs are decorated with a spooled decoration: one with metal foil, the other with ivory intarsia.



Folding Camp Stool

SYCAMORE WOOD, WITH INLAYS OF IVORY AND EBONY,
SEAT COVERED WITH LEATHER (S. 8509)
H 54 x L 87 x D 37 cm

As in every high-status household, outdoor seating was provided for, and it even had a name in ancient Egyptian. Kha must have used this camp stool for his country excursions. The stool is made up of four crossed legs, terminating in sculpted ducks' heads, inlaid with ebony eyes and ivory markings (famously erroneously described by Schiaparelli as serpents' heads). Ducks and geese figured prominently in Egyptian iconography. The duck was an important source of protein, and a luxury gourmet food fit for kings. We are all familiar with fowling scenes in the tombs. King Tutankhamun is shown seated on

a folding stool in a scene on a shrine, aiming his bow and arrow at a papyrus thicket full of birds. The absence of shooting equipment in Kha's tomb may imply a lack of interest on his part for the hunt.

Ducks could also be kept as a pet in the home, and often appear under the chair of the deceased, perhaps with erotic overtones. In some texts, the deceased wished to ascend to the heavens as a goose. Geese were also associated with hostile forces, and therefore made suitable gifts for gods, especially as burnt offerings. The two pairs of ducks on this stool clench a round connecting splint in their beaks, which lent support to the stool. The concave seat was made up of two planks with a central void, the whole covered in leather, that allowed the stool to be folded up and put away. A short black ink hieroglyphic inscription on one of the horizontal beams identifies the owner Kha as "Overseer of Works".

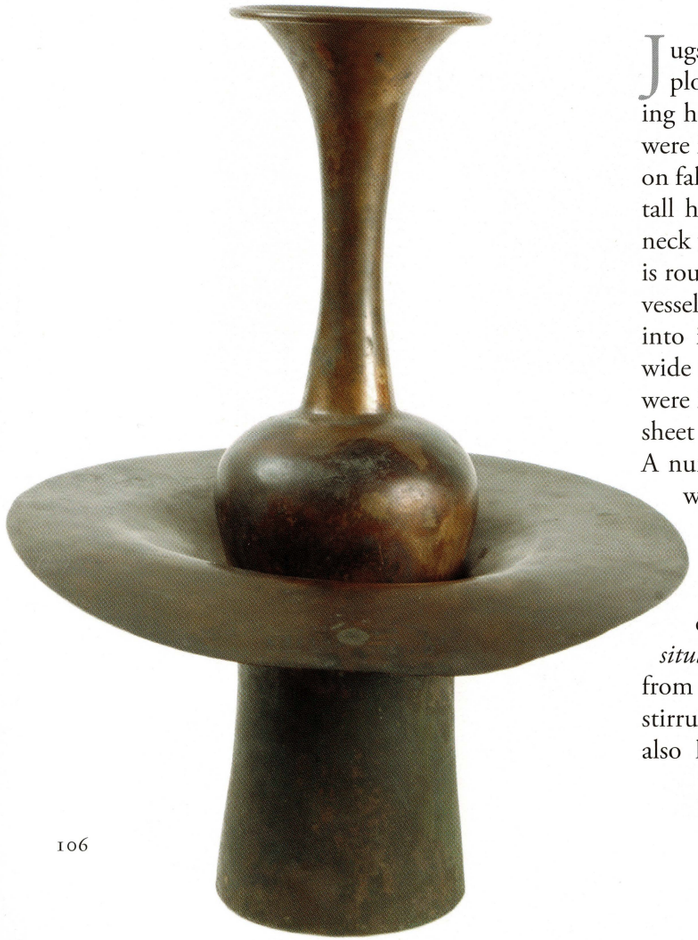
This type of stool, used as a 'camp chair', made its appearance in the Middle Kingdom, but from the New Kingdom onwards it became a high status furnishing. Simpler versions have been excavated (for example from the tomb of Sennefer), but an almost identical one with ivory-inlaid ducks' heads came from the tomb of Tutankhamun, where a matching folding headrest with ducks' heads terminals (without ivory inlay) also occurs, along with a folding 'camp bed'.

Bronze Jug and Basin and other Metalware

JUG
BRONZE (S. 8223)
H 33,3 cm x Ø 12,3 cm

BASIN
BRONZE (S. 8225)
H 19 cm x Ø 32,4 cm

LAMP
BRONZE (S. 8628)



Jugs and basins were normally employed in ancient Egypt for washing hands before and after meals, and were important enough to be depicted on false doors and funerary stelae. This tall hammered bronze jug has a long neck with a wide rim, whose diameter is roughly equal to the shoulder of the vessel. The jug with its flat base fitted into its own cylindrical basin with a wide splayed rim. Both jug and basin were hammered expertly from a single sheet of copper alloy.

A number of other base metal vessels were found in the tomb, some better executed than others. For example, one tall milk jug-like vessel (*situla*) was a gift from a certain Userhat. A total of three *situlae* was found in this tomb. Apart from its rim and separately inserted stirrup-shaped handle, that vessel was also hammered from a single sheet.

Bronze jug.

Bronze vase stand with pierced decoration and lotus-flower motifs.

Bronze washing basin.

Bronze *situla* (ritual bucket).

Wooden, papyrus-shaped stand for a bronze lamp (the lamp is a copy of the original conserved in the Cairo Museum).

Another similar vessel (uninscribed) was made in three sections, which were mechanically assembled with rivets. Although more clumsy in appearance, the latter would have required great skill from the coppersmith to seal the sections. The absence of bronze metalware from plundered tombs of high officials implies that these were among the first items to be stolen.

Kha's wealth is evident from the many bronze bowls, cylindrical jars (*alabastra*), strainers (mentioned above with Kha's personal effects), cooking pots (one stamped with Kha's monogram) and a bowl with an inscription from King Amenhotep III. The latter (Schiaparelli applied the term *patera*) was hammered with a small additional section at the rim that was bent back to join with the body and create a strap lug handle in the form of a lotus. Three bronze stands for round-based vessels were included in the furniture, as the more precious equivalents of pottery and palm-woven stands. One bronze stand with cut-out geometric and lotus decoration, was probably not actually made by cutting, but by means of casting in an elaborate mould of several sections.

Perhaps the most remarkable metal object in the tomb is a bronze open lamp that stood on a tall painted papyriform wooden stand. The bronze lamp is a simple oblong bowl with a flat tab for a handle (Schiaparelli described it as a bird shape, but that would take some imagination), found with the half burned wick still intact. Another lamp stand was found in the antechamber near Kha's bed, but without lamp. Archaeologists are familiar with Etruscan and Roman lamp stands, but this was the first Egyptian one to be discovered. Thus, one of the two lampstands and the bronze lamp (a faithful reproduction is in Turin) were retained in Egypt.

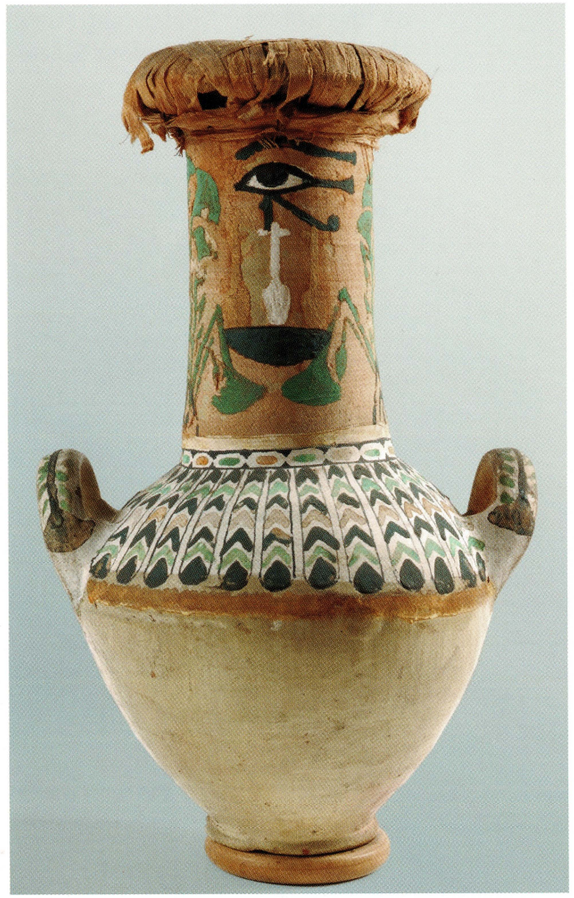
Bronze bowl with lotus-shaped handle and an inscription of pharaoh Amenhotep III.

Two-Handled Wedjat-eye Vessel

POTTERY, WITH WHITE SLIP, CANVAS COVERING NECK
WITH PAINTED DECORATION (S. 8619)
H 39 CM x Ø 23 CM

There were distinctive shapes for pottery and their stone counterparts in every period, and this was probably related to the contents. Thus, today we distiguish a coffee pot from a teapot, by means of shape, so that form follows function. This pottery vase, turned on a potter's wheel, has a globular body with two handles and a long neck with a splayed rim firmly shut with bands of linen. It is not immediately evident, but the long neck is actually completely covered by a fabric that is the same colour as the buff pottery. Two vases also have their necks covered with fabric (one decorated with zig-zags and one with stylised flowers), whereas three other vessels had their long necks covered with strips of papyrus painted with simple stylised decoration.

The vase under discussion is decorated with green papyrus plants and typical religious symbols: *nefer*-sign (heart and windpipe), a black *neb*-sign (basket) and a black-and-white painted *wedjat*-eye (a human eye with the markings of



a falcon). The decoration can be read as 'all good and healthy things'. According to myth, wicked Seth tore the eye of Horus to pieces, but it was restored by the god Thoth. The healthy eye of Horus was also considered to be the eye of the sun god Atum. As a consequence, the *wedjat*-eye was apotropaic, that is, it was believed to ward off the evil eye. The shoulder with chevrons in the same colour scheme creates a feather-like motif. A single lotus is painted on each handle with stylized green leaves. The long neck would have slowed evaporation, but to ensure that the contents were preserved well, the mouth was carefully stoppered, perhaps also with a mud seal underneath its rim. It is possible that the vessel once contained wine, highly appreciated by those who could afford the good life.

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